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DRUNKENNESS IS CURABLE.

BY JOHN FLAVEL MINES, LL. D.

ON A cold, stormy day in early April I alighted from the cars, a thousand miles from home, and made my way through a shower of sleet to the bare and gloomy hotel of a little prairie village in Illinois. Banks of snow were still scattered about, but the rain that fell continually for the next two weeks swept them away, and under the pressure of the clouds the village seemed to sink more deeply every day into the thick black mud. In all my campaigning, including the late war, I had never had such a keen sense of desolation. I was weary of the place in an hour, and wondered what could have induced me to go there.

A modern Ponce de Leon, I had started on a voyage of discovery for the fountain of renewed youth and restored manhood, against the persuasion of friends who wished me to wait and see how others fared ; in the teeth of physicians who told me that it was a deception and an old dream revamped ; and in opposition to the arguments of the medical superintendent of a fashionable "home" that fronts the waters of New York Harbor, who insisted that I would be throwing away my money. To my friends I replied that I could not wait an hour while there was a chance held out to hope. To the doctors I said nothing, knowing how physicians disagree. To the superintendent I answered : " You tell me now that I am the only person who can help myself in this matter ; if you had only told me this frankly the first day I met you, I would have saved the money paid to your institution." So I went my way alone, without faith, but with a tiny spark of hope kindled in my breast, not knowing what would befall me at Dwight. What I saw, heard, and experienced there is the best of all arguments for the treatment of the alcoholic appetite as a disease and for belief in its cure.

For twenty years I had been a victim to the disease of drink. It seized me at odd times, usually the most inopportune, and in spite of all my struggles would gain the temporary mastery. Months of peace might pass, but suddenly the fever would break loose and run riot in my veins, and I knew then that it must have its course. I have as much will-power as the next man, but my will was a straw in the grasp of this horror. Men who have not felt the clutch of drink as it sweeps through and possesses the whole system, have no conception of the agony of the struggle which the victim makes. There are no grander heroes under God's sunlight than the men who honestly fight against drink. I had battled for years, had gone voluntarily into exile in homes and asylums to escape my enemy, and only in late years recognized the fact that drunkenness was a disease, increased no doubt by indulgence, but for which a man was no more responsible than for a fever he had caught by exposure. I regret the disease. It has brought sorrow and loss to me for the years of my life that should have been most prospered. But it has not been the unalloyed curse that fanatics would persuade man to believe. Out of my sufferings the pictures drawn by Felix Oldboy have been wrought, and through struggles as fierce as death and blackness that was despair have come gleams of the sunshine of memory, painting the quiet old home in which the little lad sat by the side of his grandmother and her cat. If the present had been prosperous, I should not have carried my life into memories of the past. And so, as I believe, God sends compensation for the battle he gives each one of us to fight.

It was because I had found no permanent benefit from seclusion in an asylum or home, but rather the contrary, because I fretted against restraint that could be of no use to a periodical drinker, that I was ready to give a fair trial to the promise made me by Dr. Leslie E. Keeley, of Dwight, that he would guarantee me a cure for my disease. I told him that for more than two months my life had been one of entire sobriety, and asked him if he would undertake my cure under these circumstances. He replied that he would. It was something of an assurance to find that his experience of thirty years as a medical man, and for twenty years as a specialist in alcoholism, coincided with my experience as a sufferer. His ideas were common-sense. My own diagnosis told me that my trouble was a disease, and I felt that

it was an insult to medical science to suppose for a moment that no remedy could be found for it. I recalled my own experience with chills and fever. One autumn day in 1848 my stepmother asked me why I did not keep my teeth still. I told her that "I could not help it." It was a chill, and a violent fever followed. This took place in our home on St. John's Park in this city. Afterwards I had chills at school, in college, in the army, and at last, in May, 1868, on the very first day I took charge of a daily newspaper as managing editor, I had a chill, and then the attacks came on every day. I had taken quinine for twenty years, and was weary of it. So I went to a distinguished homœopathic physician in Albany, an old friend of my father, and asked him if he could eradicate the disease. He promised to do so if I would strictly obey his orders and not stop taking medicine until he said so. I promised, and for three months took his powders of arsenic and copper. Twenty-three years have passed and I have not had a touch of the disease since.

I mention this because dipsomania affected me in precisely the same manner. It came on at the most inopportune times, and apparently without cause. Friends never had anything to do with my drinking. I always had will-power enough to say "No" when the fever was not in my veins. When the attack came on, they could not keep me from indulgence in drink, for appetite was stronger than their will and mine too. Senseless people would ask: "Why do you drink?" I said always: "Because I cannot help it." That was the true reason and the exact state of the case. Foolish folk would go farther and say: "Look at me; I don't drink." As well might one say to a man whose face is scarred with the small-pox: "Why did you have the loathsome disease? Look at me; I never had it." Dr. Keeley treated me for dipsomania after the same fashion that the physician at Albany had followed. That Dr. Keeley is an allopathic physician made no difference to me, for I have none of the current prejudice about schools of medicine. He laid down the laws that I must follow, the time that I must stay, and insisted, as he does in all cases, on unqualified obedience while in his hands. But he gained my confidence not only by his diagnosis, but from the fact that he had brushed away at the start the musty, superstitious old cobwebs of bolts, bars, and restraints. The Keeley Institute was, and is, only an

office to which patients go for treatment and medicine. There are not even official boarding-places. The patient selects his hotel (there is a fine new one there now) or his boarding-place according to his taste and means, and is free to select his own company and amusements and to occupy his spare time as he sees fit. When I went to Dwight there were barely one hundred patients. When I left, at the end of six weeks, there were two hundred and forty under treatment. Now the number has reached five hundred. My comrades were lawyers, physicians, editors, merchants, three judges, the attorney-general of one of the new States at the West, an ex-Congressman, and an assorted lot of half a dozen State senators. Without exception they were the brightest body of men I ever met, and to say that they could meet and exchange views daily, without interference and restraint, and yet be made the victims of a fraud, is an insult to common-sense. There was no concealment, no jugglery, no suave or deceptive talk, but the simple medical treatment of our disease. As for me, it was a revelation to find that my manhood was respected from the outset, and that not only were there no school-boy "bounds" for our walks, but that in that primitive community the town marshal, with whom I lodged, never locked his front door at night.

The patient's first visit is paid to the office of Dr. Keeley, where his case is stated and where he receives a hypodermic injection in the upper left arm, and there is given to him a bottle of the bichloride-of-gold mixture, a dose of which is to be taken every two hours while awake. The hypodermic, called in Dwight the "shot," is the supporting medicine, which sustains the frame under treatment. Its preparation, and the form in which the bichloride of gold is made up for its special purpose, are Dr. Keeley's secret, and it is manifestly absurd for those not in the secret to pretend to criticise it. The treatment is administered four times a day, at 8 A.M., 12 noon, 5 P.M. and 7:30 P.M., and for three or four weeks usually, though sometimes a week or two longer, according to the personal diagnosis made by the doctor from day to day. If a new arrival needs whiskey, it is given to him in a bottle, and he can have more until his palate loathes it and he returns his unopened bottle to the doctor. From this point the work of his physical reconstruction begins. He finds that the treatment is not a mere tonic, as some have supposed. Sometimes his eyesight is affected, but only for a few days; in

some cases the memory is temporarily weakened ; in every case he becomes conscious of a feeling of lassitude and indifference to the outside world, as the gold searches into the weaker parts of his frame, and purifies and builds them up into new strength. Nor is this all. The treatment at Dwight removes such physical ills as are caused directly by drink. Dr. Keeley's programme promised this, but I had scarcely been able to credit it. As a matter of fact, I found myself relieved of twenty pounds of superfluous flesh, and am the better for it. Another patient, a native of this city, a relative of America's greatest prose-writer and bearing his name, came to Dwight on crutches, while I was there, suffering from partial paralysis caused by drink. In ten days his crutches were abandoned, and in four weeks he went away sound of frame, and with new life in his body and fresh hope in his heart.

The physical experience varies in different cases, but to each there comes at last a time when the patient discovers that all weakness and depression have vanished, and that the fetters of old appetites and habits have fallen away from him, and when he steps out of the darkness of the wilderness into the full light of day and knows that once more he has a man's strength to do a man's work among men. My own experience was somewhat rare, because I went to Dwight free from any direct effects of alcohol. I experienced no loss of memory or defection of eyesight, but after a week had passed I felt that if I had been anywhere else I would have had a return of the periodical appetite, and might have yielded to it because of my depression. I remember the terror this feeling gave me. As I stood in line, I said to Dr. Keeley: "I am glad that I came at this time. I think I have hit one of my periodical attacks, for I feel so blue and wretched that if I were in New York I should yield and drink." "And the boy," inquired the doctor, looking searchingly at me; "you wouldn't leave him?" "Of course not," I said; "I do not intend to drink, but I thought it right to tell you the symptoms." He bade me wait until the line of patients had gone through their treatment, then took me into his own office, poured out nearly half a tumbler of whiskey, with a little water added, and said: "Drink it." "What is it?" I asked. "No matter," was the reply; "drink it." I drank half of it and said: "Why, it's whiskey." "Drink it all," said Dr. Keeley. "When you need whis-

key, I would as readily give you that as anything else." I drank, went to dinner, went walking in the afternoon, and never thought of it again until I went back to the office at the regular hour. Nor did I want any more, nor want to take the two-ounce bottle of whiskey which was handed me at noon next day with injunctions to take the dose in about twenty minutes. That was the end of my drinking, and all that has passed my lips since the 31st day of January. Formerly a drink of whiskey would have set my brain on fire, and in an hour's time I would have walked ten miles to get the second one, and had it at all hazards. When I saw that it had ceased to make me its victim and slave, I could have cried for joy. I knew from that moment that the bichloride of gold had gotten the upper hand, broken the fetters of disease, and made me whole. Yet I was not entirely out of the woods. When this hour of temporary temptation had gone by, I passed through such an experience as is apt to follow a prolonged debauch, and for two weeks could scarcely eat or sleep. Then, suddenly, as if I had stepped out of the blackness of an African jungle into the quiet sunshine of Central Park, I broke out of my living tomb and knew that I was cured. The knowledge came to me like a benediction from heaven.

I had taken with me, for company, my son, a little lad who had not quite reached his sixteenth birthday, and who, as "Master Felix," is known to thousands who have never seen him. He saw and heard everything at Dwight. The stake was a large one to him, and he watched the process anxiously. When we came away, life had a new meaning for us both. He has had a happy summer, for he has never doubted, and has never had a fear, whether I was with him or absent. To him, as to me, the memory of that handful of white houses set among stately cottonwoods on the prairie, will always come up steeped with the fragrance of the May blossoms that first taught hope, and then impressed faith in the work that was doing.

Master Felix knew every patient there, and studied them all without prejudices. Elected an honorary member of the Bichloride of Gold Club, to which I had also been elected, he attended every meeting, and by a gift of books laid the foundation of the club library which was called by his name. His companions there and mine were Mr. Opie Read, editor of *The Arkansaw Traveller*, ex-Congressman Tarsney, of Michigan, George Work, of New

York, Judge J. D. Thayer, of Warsaw, Ind., State Senator Rust, of Wisconsin, Captain Robert Ayres, late of the United States Army, a graduate of West Point and a veteran of the war, and many others who have given me permission to use their names, and who are sound and enthusiastic in the faith. They are all members of the Bichloride of Gold Club, at Dwight, a voluntary association of patients and graduates of the Keeley Institute, intended, like other clubs, for the convenience and benefit of its members. The number of its members enrolled in the books up to August 27 was 850, and of this total only six had come under discipline and had their names stricken from the rolls. Dr. Keeley guarantees a cure of 95 per cent. of his patients. The club keeps a paternal and watchful eye on all who go out from under its roof, and it reports a loss of less than 1 per cent. Those are from the ranks of men sent there unwillingly by parents or guardians, and in no case of men who voluntarily sought freedom from disease.

No one who has not been similarly cursed with the disease of drink can know the joy of the moment in which my cure came to me as a fact. I do not believe, I know, that I am cured, and am satisfied as to its permanency. I did not doubt twenty years ago that I was cured of the chills and fever; I did not doubt, when this last May came around with its blossoms of spring, that my cure was permanent, and that the appetite for drink was eradicated. I do not understand the processes, but I know the fact. Said Mr. George Work, of this city, who was one of my companions at Dwight, "I tell my friends that all I know about it is that I went to Dwight, and there Dr. Keeley cured me"; and as he said this I thought unconsciously of the blind man by the pool of Siloam, and his reply to the doubters who gathered around and tormented him. To all of us who suffered and have been healed it is a resurrection. As I passed along the streets a year ago, and was greeted by my friends, I knew that they looked upon me as a slave to habit. They knew how well I had fought, but they had no belief in my final victory. However strong and healthy I might appear at the time, they looked on me as doomed. I felt it and could see the pity in their eyes. I always moved among them as the gladiator of old Rome who, with the blue sky of Italia over his head, Cæsar before his face, and a shouting multitude surrounding him, knew that whatever

temporary triumphs he might win, the white sands at his feet would one day drink his blood. Always, as I walked among my fellows, the words of doom came to my lips, "Morituri te salutamus." To-day I meet my fellow man with open gaze, knowing that I have conquered the black lion of the desert; and my sense of freedom and happiness no man can paint.

The city of New York receives the sum of \$1,468,130 from license fees, or, as I might put it, for the privilege of making drunkards. Not one dollar of this money is expended for the purpose of saving the victims of drink. Is there anything in the facts that I have made known, to suggest that the city of my love, and to which I have devoted the best powers of my pen, has a duty to do in this matter?

JOHN FLAVEL MINES.
(FELIX OLDBOY.)